Vol. 79 No. 15 **JANUARY 8, 2002**

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS PESTICIDE EXAM SCHEDULE
UMASS Eastern Extension Center—240 Beaver St., Waltham
JANUARY 17. Deadline for submitting application is **JANUARY 10.**
QUESTIONS CALL—617-626-1785.

BAR CODES AND FRUIT FINALLY MIX

By Laura Elia

On June 26, 1974 a pack of Wrigley's chewing gum became the first product ever scanned using a bar code in Marsh Supermarket, in Troy, OH. Almost 30 years later, the bar code has become a ubiquitous data entry method because of its speed and accuracy. U.P.C.s (universal product codes) can be seen on virtually every product we buy, whether it is a pack of gum or a bag of dog food. But if this code is so universal, then why isn't it being used on produce?

Currently, the PLU (price look up) numbers on most produce are used to separate a Fuji apple from a Gala. "One of the problems today is that many clerks will pick up an apple and make an assumption, without looking at the PLU. This leads to inaccurate pricing at the front end," says Bill Hallier, president of Sinclair Systems International, a manufacturer and supplier of labels for fresh produce. "The primary purpose of bar codes is to assist retailers in managing inventory, and to speed up and increase accuracy in the front end."

This all makes sense—until you imagine a plum with a big bar code wrapped around it. The reason bar codes have yet to be used on produce is simple: Bar codes are too big. In order to alleviate this problem, "the grocery industry requested new bar codes to help identify small, loose products," says Greg Rowe, manager of industry initiatives for the Uniform Code Council (UCC) and project manager for the RSS (Reduced Space Symbology). The UCC responded by creating the RSS-14 code. (The 14 indicates the number of bars on the code). "Before, we had to deal with database constraints," says Rowe. Now databases are larger and more information can be put into them."

And, as always, with new technology comes change. The new bar codes are so advanced that they can distinguish even more detail, the size of a pear—whether it is small, medium or large. In the future, the RSS will be able to distinguish even more detail, such as whether a pear is size 45 or size 64.

The first six to eight digits of the RSS code will be the manufacturer's prefix, so there will be a distinction between a Dole navel orange and a Sunkist navel orange. This means individual pieces of produce can be linked back to the manufacturer.

Retail operations are also becoming more advanced. As of Jan. 1, 2005, all retailers in the U.S. will be required to have the ability to scan an EAN 13 bar code. "The EAN 13 is used throughout the world, except for North America, and it has 13 bars compared to the standard U.P.C. 12- digit structure, because it must contain a country code since so many countries use it," says Rowe. "And the UCC has recommended to go up to 14 because of the new bar codes."

However, things won't change much at the packing level, according to Hallier. "They (packinghouses) all currently have labeling equipment—so they don't have to change their equipment, only their labels." As for the grower? Things won't change at all. The code will not contain information allowing the product to be traced back to Joe's Orchard, says Rowe.

There is currently a two-part pilot study taking place in Dorothy Lane Markets, in Dayton, OH. The first part, a time and motion study, monitors the front end of the store. "We employed NCR's human factors department to videotape the front end's current transactions," says Rowe. (NCR, a human factors engineering company, designs solutions for retailers to optimize point of purchase sales.) "Then there will be a second videotaping in the same store, with the same people scanning with a new bar code. Hopefully, we will see more accuracy and speed."

The UCC is also employing the Perishables Group to quantify a cost/benefit analysis. They will take information from the NCR study and visit retailers and suppliers, surveying them on the use of RSS-14, such as what it will cost the retailer or the packinghouse.

(Article from AMERICAN FRUIT GROWER, August 2001)

U.S. GRADES FOR APPLES

CRACKS

No unhealed crack or crack showing marginal softening or decay is allowed in any grade.

Amount allowed if crack is well healed:

U.S. Extra Fancy not over ¼" in length
U.S. Fancy not over ¼" in length
U.S. No. 1 not over ¼" in length

APPLE SHIPMENT TRACKING
Source: USDA
Amounts are shown in units of 10,000 pounds

Season Begins					
SEPTEMBER	**12/16/01-12/22/01**	**12/09/01-12/15/01**	**12/17/00-12/23/00**	**Total this season 12/22/01**	**Total last season 12/23/00**
	10,036	**12,725**	**10,542**	**163,590**	**197,027**

MID-WEEK F.O.B. PRICES AT MASSACHUSETTS COUNTRY SHIPPING POINT
Prices and grades received by telephone, January 8, 2002
No Change
Controlled Atmosphere rooms being opened

VARIETY	GRADE	SIZE	PRICE
McINTOSH	Cartons Cell Pack U.S. Extra Fancy	80s	**19.00**
		96s	**18.50**
	Cartons Film Bags U.S. Fancy	12-3s 2-1/2" min	**12.50**
	Cartons Tote Bags U.S. Fancy	8-5s 2-1/2" min	**14.00**
CORTLAND	Cartons Cell Pack U.S. Extra Fancy	72s & 80s	**18.00**
	Cartons Film Bags U.S. Fancy	12-3s 2-1/2" min	**12.50**
	Cartons Tote Bags U.S. Fancy	8-5s 2-1/2" min	**14.00**
EMPIRE	Cartons Cell Pack U.S. Extra Fancy	80s	**18.00**
		96s	**17.50**
	Cartons Film Bags U.S. Fancy	12-3s 2-1/2" min	**11.50**
	Cartons Tote Bags U.S. Fancy	8-5s 2-1/2" min	**13.00**
RED DELICIOUS	Cartons Tray Pack U.S. Extra Fancy	80s & 88s	**13.50**
	Cartons Film Bags U.S. Fancy	12-3s 2-1/2" min	**11.00**
	Cartons Tote Bags U.S. Fancy	8-5s 2-1/2" min	**13.00**

FEDERAL MARKET NEWS SERVICE, EVERETT, MASS.
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NEW ENGLAND			
McINTOSH	Cartons Cell Pack U.S. Extra Fancy	80s	**18.00-19.00 mostly 19.00**
		96s & 100s	**18.00-19.00**
	Cartons Cell Pack U.S. No. 1	80s	**12.00**
		100s & 120s	**9.50-10.00**
		140s	**9.50**
	Cartons Film Bags U.S. No. 1	12-3s 2-3/8" min	**9.50**

CORTLAND	Cartons Cell Pack U.S. Extra Fancy	80s	**18.00**
	Cartons Cell Pack U.S. No. 1	96s	**13.00**
SHIPPED IN			
McINTOSH	NY Hudson Valley Ctns CelPk U.S.ExFcy	80s & 100s	**19.00**
	Lake Champlain Cartons CelPk U.S. ExFcy	80s	**24.00**
		100s	**21.00**
	NY Hudson Valley Ctns CelPk U.S. Fcy	100s, 120s, 140s	**9.00-10.00**
	Lake Champlain Ctns CelPk U.S. No. 1	100s & 120s	**12.00**
	Lake Champlain Ctns FlmBg U.S. ExFcy	12-3s 2-1/2" up	**12.00**
EMPIRE	NY Hudson Valley Ctns CelPk U.S. Fcy	80s	**19.00**
	NY Hudson Valley Ctns FlmBg U.S. ExFcy	12-3s 2-1/2" min	**12.00**
RED DELICIOUS	WA Cartons Tray Pack WAExFcy	64s, 72s, 80s, 88s	**17.00-19.00 mostly 17.00-18.00 fine appear. 20.00-22.00**
		100s	**17.00-19.00 mostly 17.00-18.00 fine appear. 20.00**
		113s	**16.00-18.00 mostly 17.00 fine appear. 20.00**
		125s	**16.00-18.00 mostly 16.00-17.00**
	NY Hudson Valley Ctns FlmBgs U.S. ExFcy	12-3s 2-1/2" min	**12.00**
GOLDEN DELICIOUS	WA Cartons Tray Pack WAExFcy **Controlled Atmosphere**	64s	**24.00**
		72s & 80s	**23.50**
		88s	**21.50-23.00 mostly 22.00**
		100s	**20.00-20.50**
		125s	**18.00**
	NY Hudson Valley Ctns FlmBgs U.S. ExFcy	12-3s 2-1/2" min	**12.00**
ROME	NY Hudson Valley Ctns FlmBgs U.S. ExFcy	12-3s 2-1/2" min	**12.00**
ROYAL GALA	WA Cartons Tray Pack WAExFcy **Controlled Atmosphere**	72s	**28.00**
		80s	**Fine appear. 26.00**
		88s	**Fine appear. 29.00**
JONAGOLD	WA Cartons Tray Pack WAExFcy	88s	**22.00**
FUJI	PA Cartons Tray Pack U.S. ExFcy	80s	**23.00-24.00**
	WA Cartons Tray Pack WAExFcy	56s & 64s	**22.00**
		80s	**20.00**
BRAEBURN	WA Cartons Tray Pack WAExFcy	80s	**24.50**
		88s	**23.50-25.00 mostly 24.00-24.50**
GRANNY SMITH	CA Cartons Tray Pack U.S. ExFcy **Controlled Atmosphere**	72s & 80s	**26.00**
	WA Cartons Tray Pack WAExFcy	64s, 72s, 80s	**Fine appear. 24.00**
		88s	**Fine appear. 22.00-24.00**
		100s	**Fine appear. 20.00-22.00**
		113s	**Fine appear. 18.00**
CIDER	New England Preserved Cartons	4-1 gallon bottles	**9.00- 9.40 mostly 9.00**
		9 ½-gallon bottles	**10.00 best 11.25**
Howard Vinton, Editor			